

Canada's Changing Population: Key Trends Shaping our Future

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Shine On 

As we look to the future and how the YMCA can continue to be a vital part of nurturing vibrant, healthy communities, YMCA Canada commissioned four reports to explore areas where significant changes lie ahead.

Launched at the 2024 YMCA National Conference in Halifax in June, the goal is to have the reports provide additional insights and context for YMCA leaders across the Federation as we consider our next strategic plan and where we go from here.

By understanding these trends and their impact on the YMCA and our communities, we can ensure our mission remains relevant as Canada and the world around us changes. The four areas of focus are:

- Demographics
- Technology
- Climate Change
- Future of Work

Introduction

Canada's population today is very different from what it was **50 years ago**. It is much bigger, having almost doubled from **22 million** in 1971 to over **40 million** at the start of 2024. It is much older. 50 years ago, almost one in every two Canadians was under the age of 25; today that proportion is only **28 percent**. And it is more diverse. In 1971, more than seven in ten Canadians reported British or French ethnic origins. By 2021, that proportion had fallen to four in ten. Over the same 50-year period, the proportion reporting Asian ethnic origins grew from **1.3 percent** to **19.3 percent**.¹

Looking ahead, these trends will persist: the Canadian population will continue to grow, to age, and to diversify. But the details of exactly how these changes will play out matter. Population growth, for instance, will be uneven across the country; in some areas, the number of residents will actually decline. And other changes in population characteristics are taking place that go well beyond the total number, age or ethnicity.

This report explores the ways in which Canada is changing by highlighting nine specific demographic trends. The goal is twofold. First, it is to provide a concise but comprehensive look at how demographic change is affecting Canada today. The second is to anticipate how the country will look in another 25 years, as the year 2050 approaches. The demographic trends unfolding today will shape our future.

¹The way the census counts ethnic origins has changed significantly over the year, making comparisons over time imperfect. See the report on this topic in 2021 Census at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026b-eng.htm>. Data on ethnic origins from the 2021 Census is from Statistics Canada Table 98-10-0355-01 (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810035501>). Data on ethnic origins from the 1971 Census can be accessed at <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.834359/publication.html>.

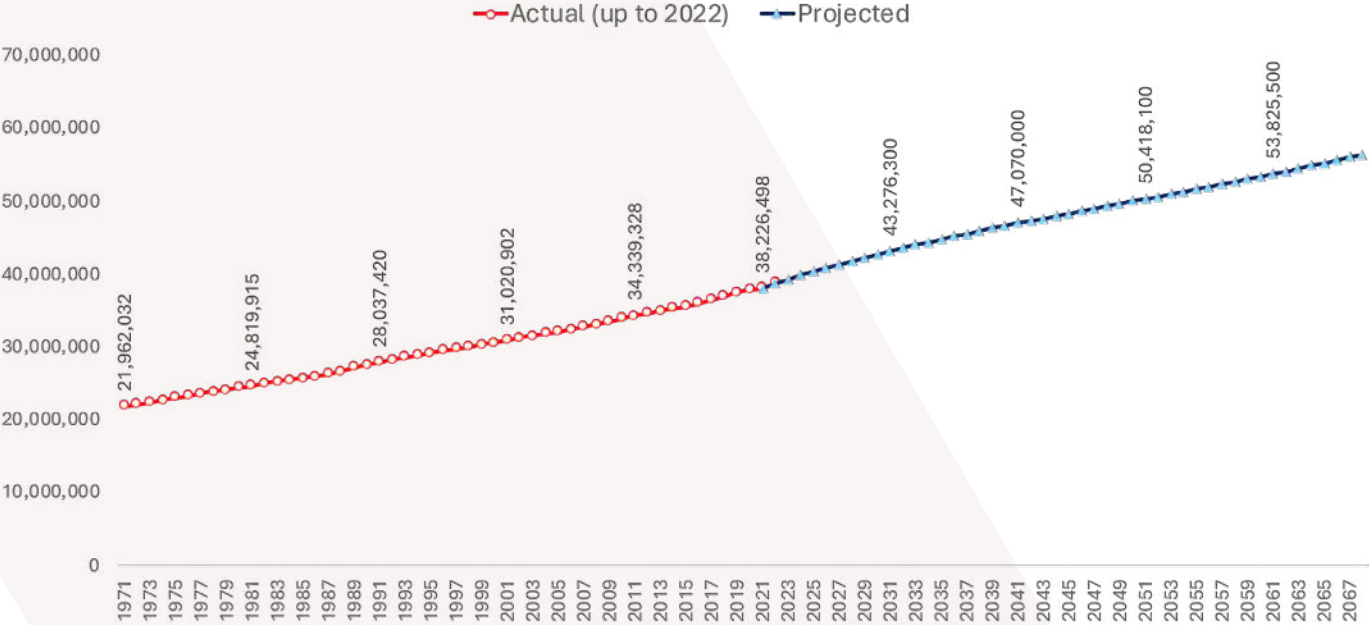
Among other things, this report highlights a series of paradoxes. As mentioned, the country is becoming more populated overall while some regions face the challenge of depopulation. And while there are more and more people around, Canadians increasingly find themselves living alone. We are facing the tremendous challenge of an ageing society, yet for the first time in decades the number of children will soon begin to increase. Our society as a whole is becoming more secular, while at the same time some religious affiliations are growing. And while people from all backgrounds are becoming more educated than ever, several gaps in educational attainment are widening. Understanding the implications of these and other developments can help governments, companies, and community organizations better prepare for the Canada that awaits them.

1. Population growth

Canada’s total population has nearly doubled since 1971, increasing from just under 22 million to over 40 million in 2023.² It is projected to reach 50 million by 2050 (see Chart 1).

► Canada: total population, actual and projected 1971-2068

Chart 1



Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0005-01 (Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex) and Table 17-10-0057-01 (Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1).

² Current population estimates are from Statistics Canada, [Table 17-10-0009-01 \(Population estimates, quarterly\)](#).

The rate of population growth, however, is higher in some areas of the country than others. In general terms, the population is growing faster west of the Ottawa River than east of it. As a result, over time, a greater share of the total population is located in Ontario and the West, and a smaller share is located in Atlantic Canada and Quebec.

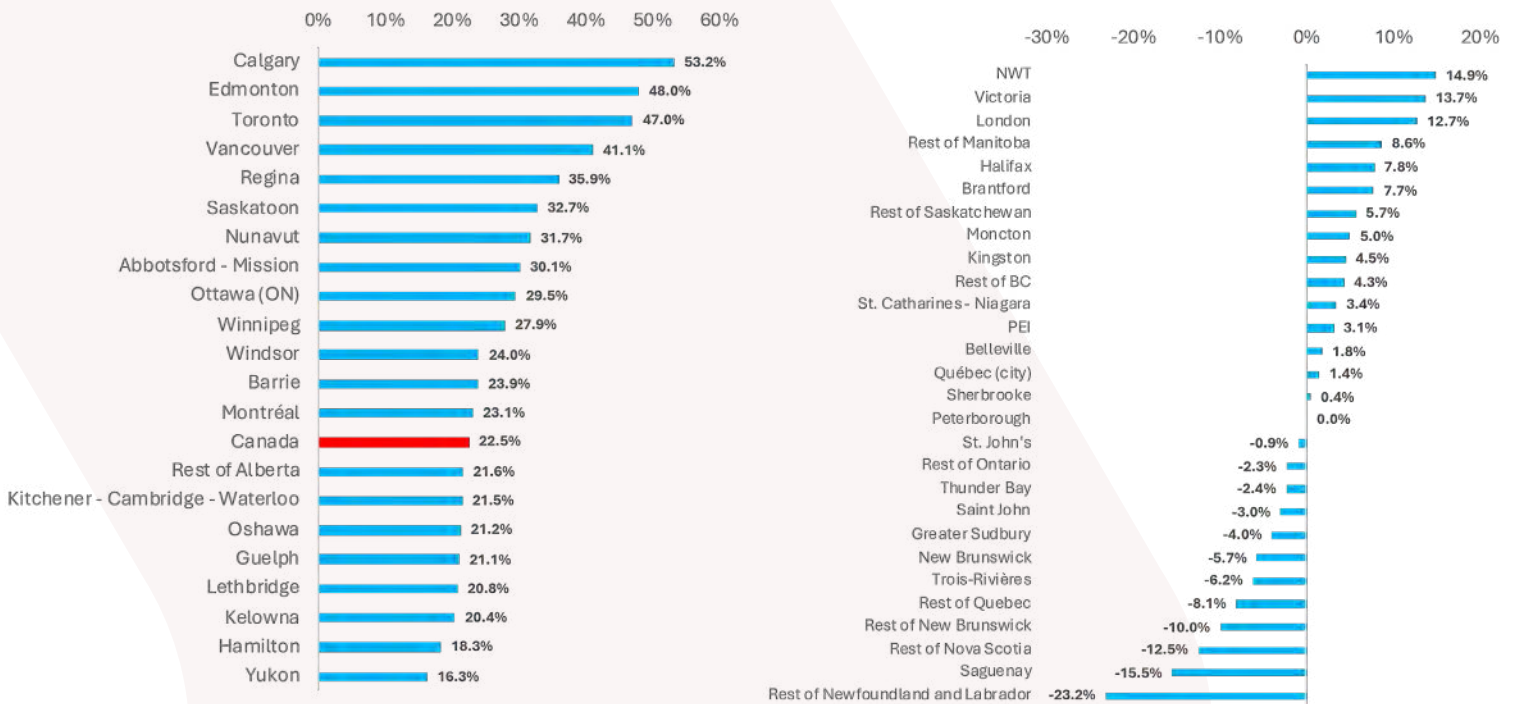
The population is also increasing at a faster rate than average in some of the country's largest cities, most notably Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto and Vancouver. Other cities with above average growth rates include Prairie cities such as Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, Abbotsford-Mission in BC, and Ottawa-Gatineau.

Other cities in the West (Lethbridge, Victoria), in Ontario (Hamilton, Kingston), and in Atlantic Canada (Halifax, Moncton) will continue to grow in population over the next two decades, but at a rate that is below average. The number of residents in those cities will increase, but the **proportion** of Canadians who live there will decline.

Finally, in some areas of the country, the population will decrease (see Chart 2). By the early 2040s, cities such as Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Trois Rivières, Saint John, and St John's will have fewer residents than they do today. The same is true for the rural areas of provinces such as Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

► **Projected population change by city (CMA) or region 2022-2043**

Chart 2

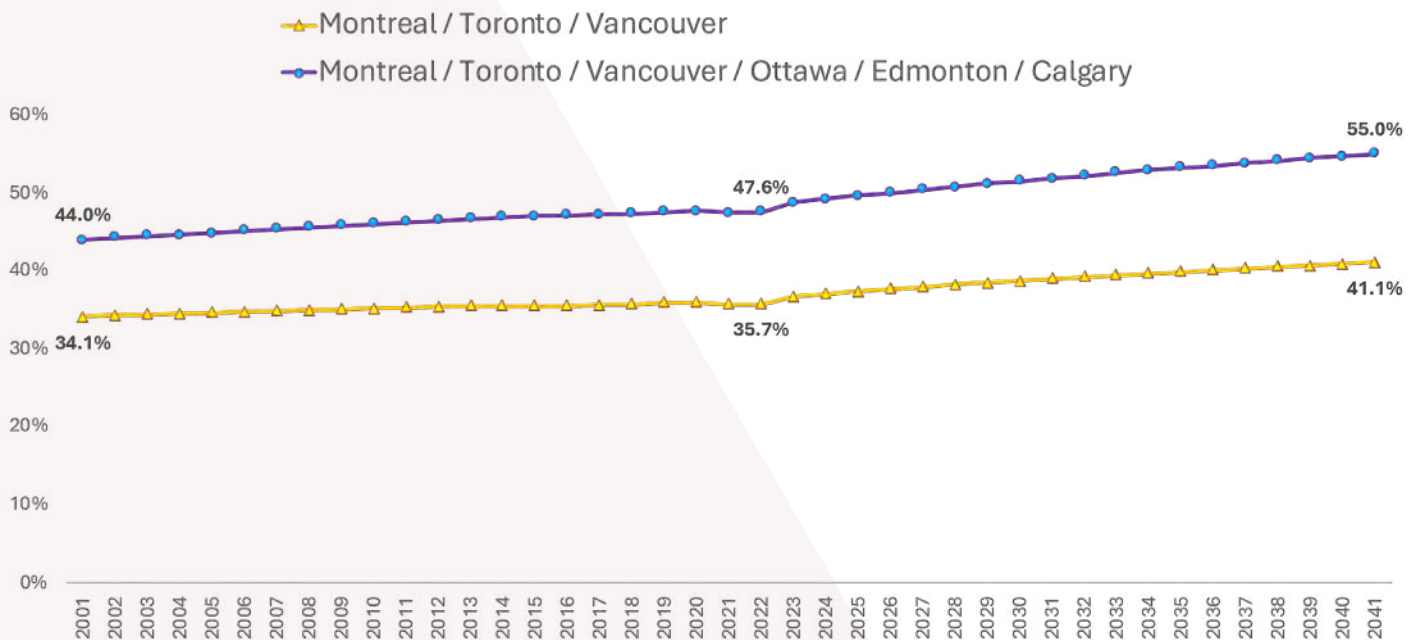


Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0146-01 (Projected population by racialized group, generation status and other selected characteristics).

The overall trend is that Canada’s population will continue to grow while also becoming more concentrated in the country’s largest cities. In other words, the population will be larger but less evenly distributed. By 2026, one of out every two Canadians will be living in just six cities (metropolitan areas): Montreal, Ottawa-Gatineau, Toronto, Edmonton and Calgary and Vancouver. This proportion will continue to rise, reaching 55 percent by 2041 (see Chart 3). By that year (2041), the population of metropolitan Toronto will have surpassed 10 million, that of Montreal will have reached 5.5 million, and that of Vancouver will be over 4 million.

► **Largest cities (CMAs) as a % of Canada’s total population
2001-2022 (actual) and 2023-2041 (projection)**

Chart 3



Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0135-01 (Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries), and Table 17-10-0146-01 (Projected population by racialized group, generation status and other selected characteristics).

The concentration of growth in a relatively small number of cities will shape the competition for resources. Areas with the fastest growth rates will require the most investment in infrastructure, programs and services. Other areas growing more slowly will also require investment to meet increased demand, but as their share of the country’s total population falls, their needs risk being overshadowed. Finally, areas with declining population will face a different challenge of maintaining programs and services, often across geographically large areas, for fewer and fewer people.

2. Children and seniors

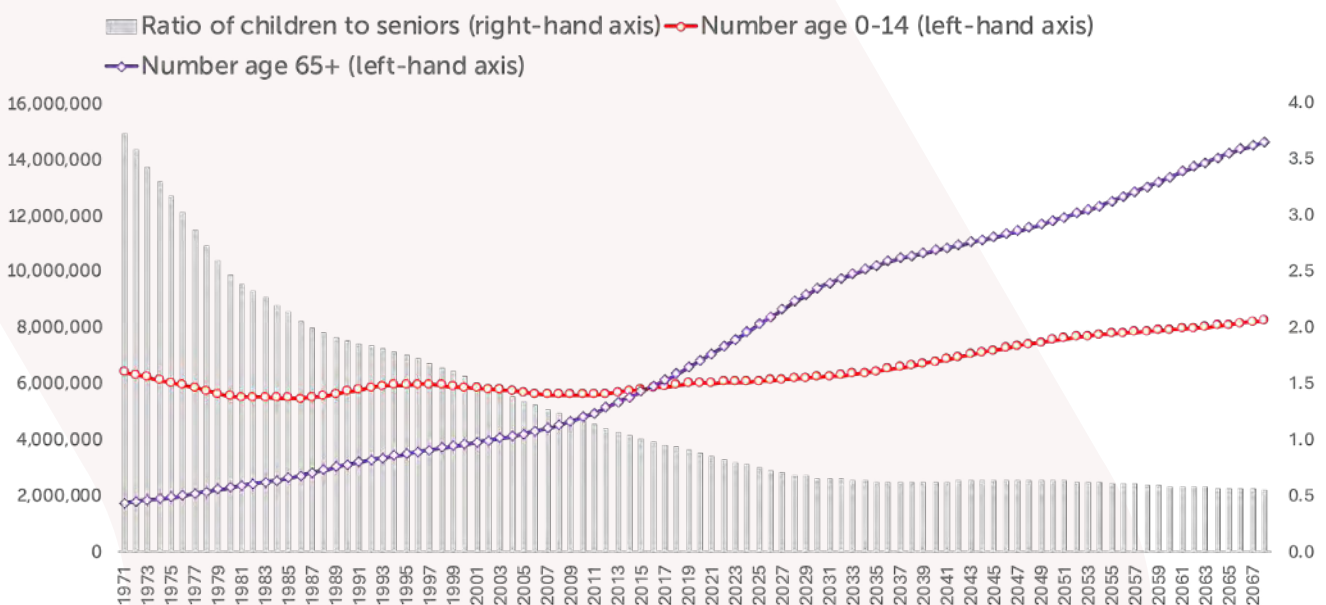
The ageing of the population is one of the most well-known demographic trends, not only in Canada, but throughout the developed world. The share of seniors (age 65 and older) within Canada's population has already more than doubled in the 50 years since 1971, from 8.0 percent to 18.5 percent. By 2061, it is projected that one in four Canadians will be 65 years old or older.

There are several ways to describe the ageing of the population.

- The first is in terms of absolute numbers. Whereas in 1971, there were only 1.8 million seniors living in Canada, there are 7 million today. The figure will reach 13.5 million by 2061. Between 2021 and 2061, the number of Canadians age 75 and older will more than double, from 3 million to 7.5 million; the number of people age 90 and older will quadruple, from fewer than 350,000 to almost 1.4 million.
- The second is as a share of the total population. As mentioned, the proportion of the total population age 65 and older will reach 25 percent by 2061. The proportion age 75 and older will reach 14 percent.
- A third is by presenting the number of seniors in relation to the number of children. In 1976, there were three times as many children (younger than 15 years old) than seniors in Canada, but this ratio has fallen steadily since then. By 1987, there were only twice as many children as seniors, and the size of the two groups became equal in number 2016 (see Chart 4); since then, seniors have outnumbered children. The ratio of children to seniors will continue to decline, reaching 0.56 by 2068.

► Canada: population of youngest and oldest age groups 1971-2022 (actual) and 2023-2068 (projection)

Chart 4



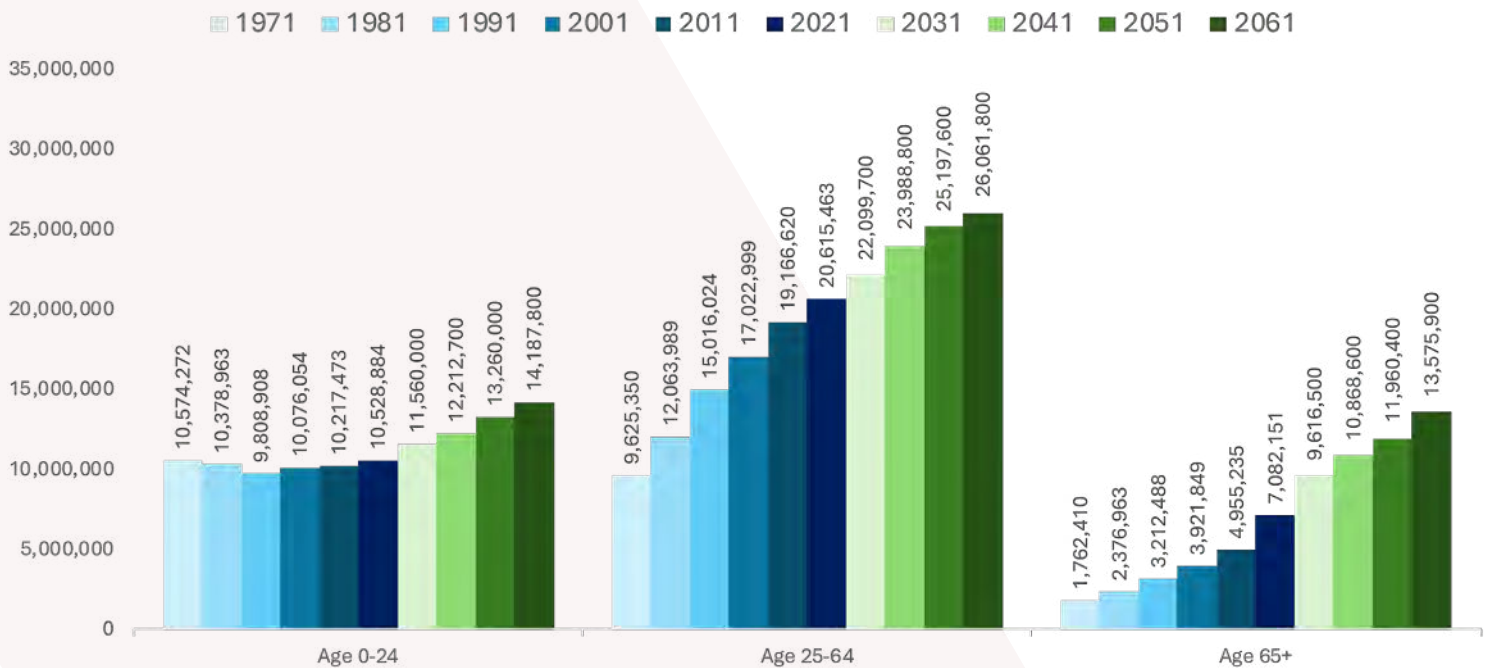
Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0005-01 (Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex) and Table 17-10-0057-01 (Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1). Projection based on the medium growth scenario (M1).

In the context of the ageing population, it is natural to focus on the growth of the older population and how this will affect demand for both public and private programs and services. But the flip side of the coin – namely the size of the younger population – should not be overlooked.

Despite significant overall population growth over the 50 years between 1971 and 2021, the number of younger Canadians (age 0 to 24) did not increase. All of the population growth we have experienced over the past five decades has been among those age 25 and older. As cities grew, new neighbourhoods were built, new businesses started, and new hospitals opened, the number of young people requiring teachers, music and swimming lessons, summer camps and summer jobs, remained unchanged (see Chart 5). In the case of the narrower cohort of school-age children (age 5 to 19), the number actually declined in the 1970s and 1980s, and today remains below where it stood in 1971 (see Chart 6).

► **Canada: population by age group, actual (1971-2022) and projected (2023-2068)**

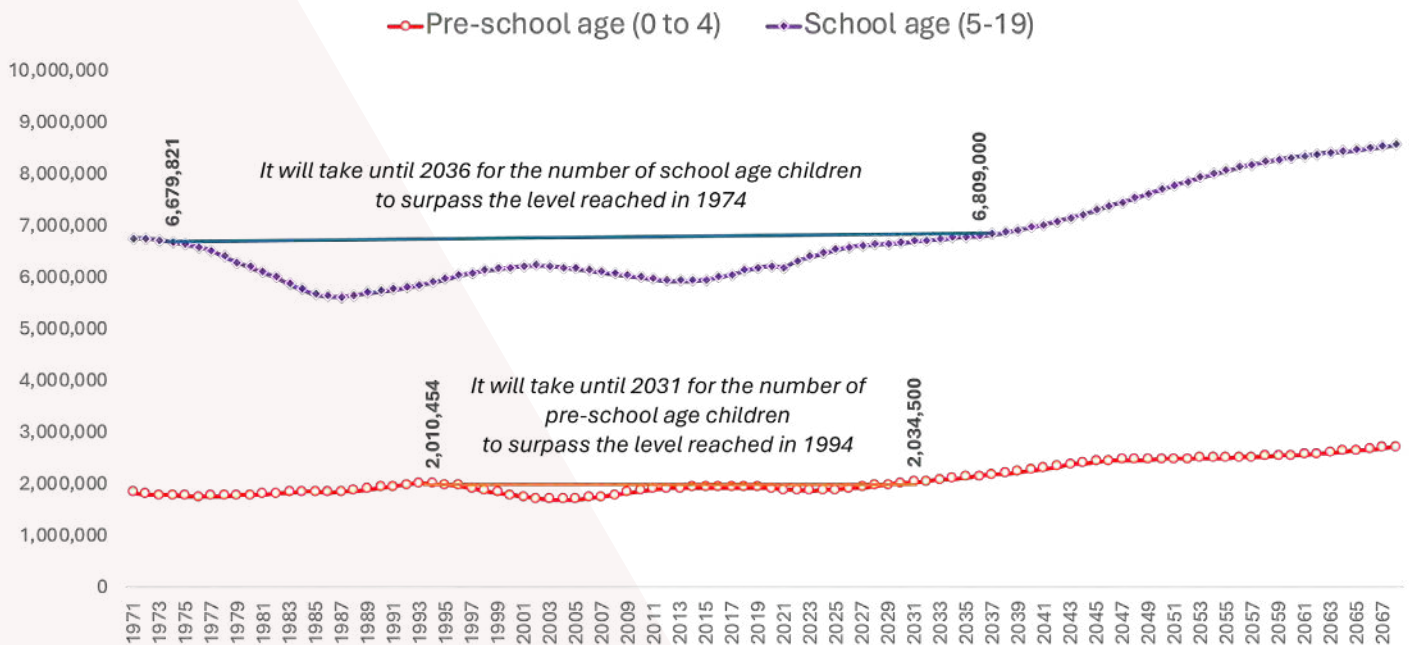
Chart 5



Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0005-01 (Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex) and Table 17-10-0057-01 (Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1).

► **Canada: total population of pre-school and school age children, actual (1971-2022) and projected (2023-2068)**

Chart 6



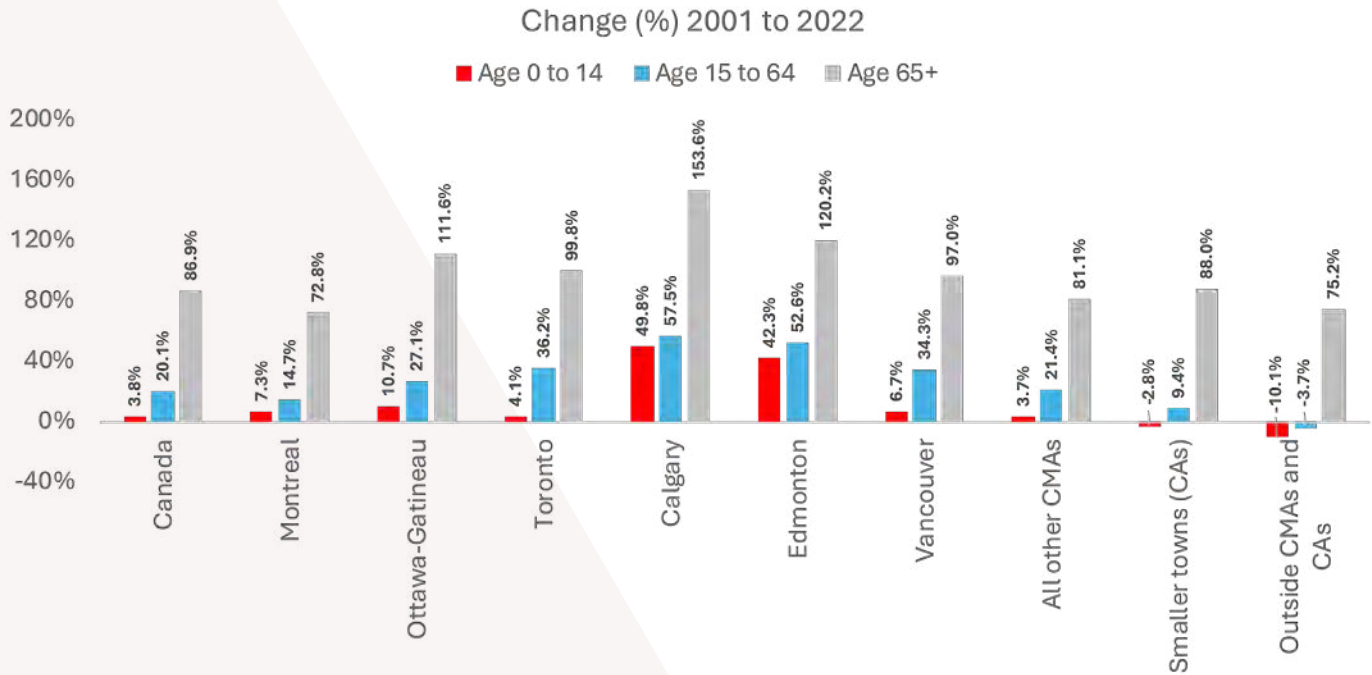
Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0005-01 (Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex) and Table 17-10-0057-01 (Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1).

The best way to describe the ageing of Canadian society, then, is to go beyond the fact that on average people are living longer, or that the seniors represent a growing share of the total population, and to add more specifically that, over the last several decades, Canada has achieved significant overall population growth without any increase in the number of children.

Of course, this has not happened evenly across the country – high growth areas have added children to their local populations, while slower growth areas have seen a decline. In the two decades since 2001, for instance, the number of children below the age of 15 increased by over 40 percent in both Calgary and Edmonton, compared to around seven percent in Montreal and Vancouver, and to only four percent in Toronto. But in smaller towns and rural areas, the number of children in this age group declined (see Chart 7).

► Change in population from 2001 to 2022, by age group

Chart 7



Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0135-01 (Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries).

The long-term overall stagnation in the number of younger Canadians, however, is now set to end. Even as the share of the total population that is under the age of 25 continues to fall (due to the more rapid growth in the older population), the number of Canadian under the age of 25 has begun to grow again, finally surpassing the number of 10.6 million seen 50 years ago (see Chart 5). The country will add a million more people in this age group between 2021 and 2031. By 2061, the size of this younger population will reach 14 million.

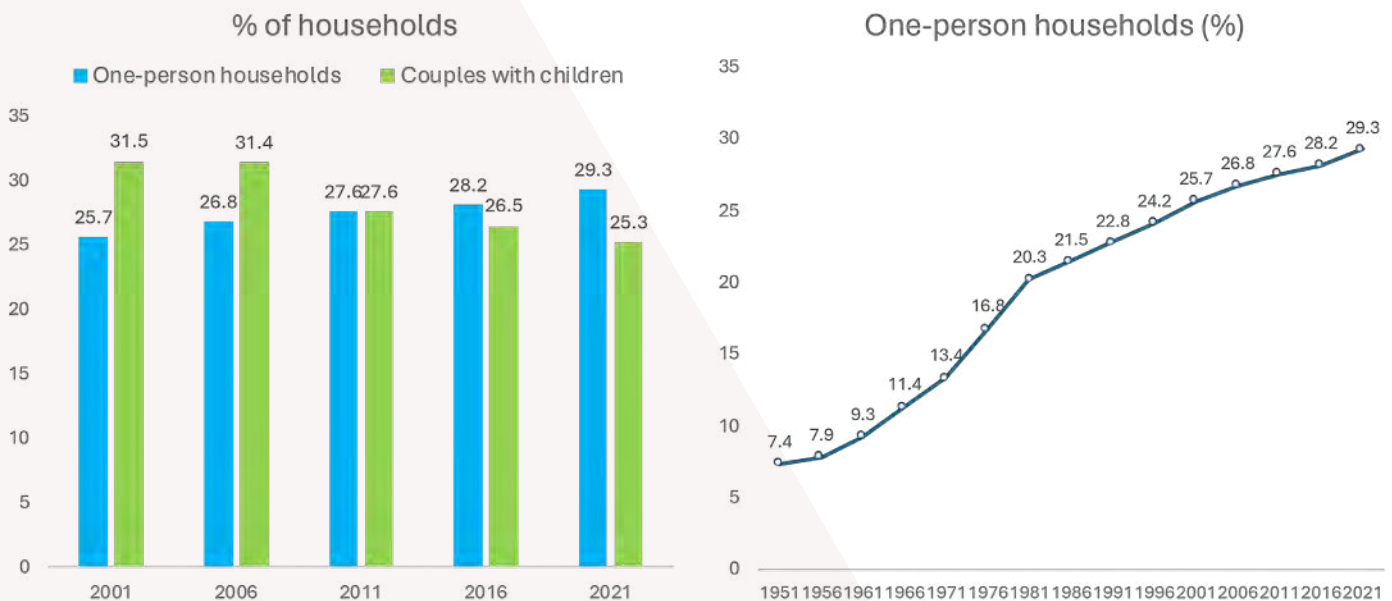
Organizations that deliver programs and services to children and youth will therefore begin to see a growth in their client base in the coming years – and this for the first time in decades. Yet the extent of this growth will still be overshadowed by the pace of growth in the number of seniors.

3. Families and households

One of the most profound social changes in Canada over the past several decades is the growth of one-person households. Until recently, the most common type of household in the country consisted of couples living together with their children. This changed in 2016, when for the first time more Canadians lived on their own than lived as part of a couple with children. The growth in one-person households has continued since then (see Chart 8).

► Distribution of households and growth of one-person households 1951-2021

Chart 8



Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0138-01 (Household type including multigenerational households and structural type of dwelling).

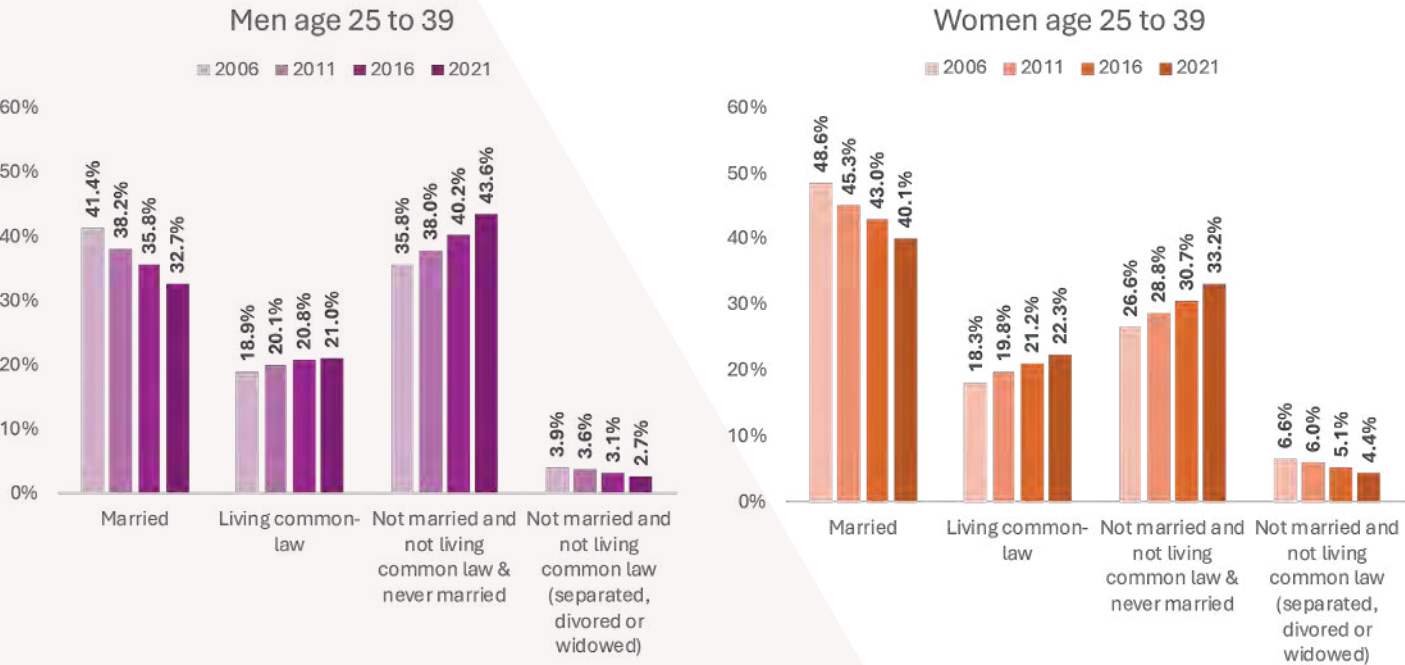
In terms of individuals, and not households, the overall proportion that lives alone is still relatively small: in 2021, 14.5 percent of Canadians age 15 and older lived on their own. But this proportion is up from 9.2 percent in 1981.³ This increase has been concentrated among those age 25 to 64. Living alone is more common among seniors than among younger adults, but the proportion of seniors living alone has nonetheless declined since 1981 (likely because of the increased life expectancy of men, leading to fewer older widows).

³ Statistics Canada, "Home Alone," The Daily (July 13, 2022); <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220713/dq220713a-eng.htm>.

What is driving this change in households and living arrangements is that more working-age adults are remaining single rather than living as part of a couple (see Chart 9). In the case of those age 25 to 39, for instance, the proportion of men who are single and have never been married increased from 36 percent in 2006 to 44 percent in 2021. In the case of women in this age group, the proportion increased from 27 percent to 33 percent. Men in their late 20s or in their 30s were previously more likely to be married than to be single; this is no longer the case.

► **A growing portion of young adults are neither married nor living common law 2006-2021**

Chart 9



Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0125-01 (Marital status, age group and gender).

To focus on the growing proportion of young adults who are single or living alone is not to imply that those in this situation necessarily feel lonely. Many will have close relationships with extended family, friends and colleagues. But families are, among other things, economic units: couples living together in the same households typically combine resources and share household tasks. Whether or not young adults feel lonely, a growing number are nonetheless managing the demands of daily life on their own.

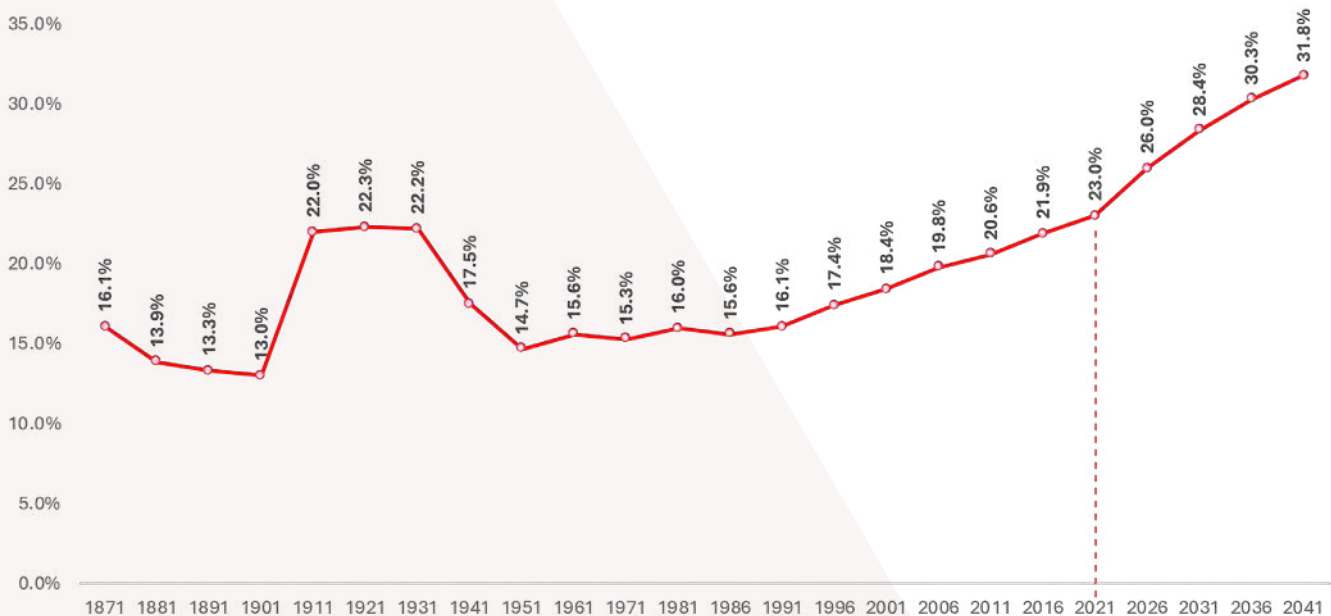
4. Immigration

Since the start of the period of European colonization, immigration has been an essential driver of population growth in Canada. But immigration is becoming increasingly important in this regard.

For several decades following the end of the Second World War, immigrants composed about 15 percent of the Canadian population. But from the 1990s onwards, this proportion has been rising (see Chart 10). In 2021, it reached 23 percent – the highest proportion in the country’s history – and is expected to surpass 30 percent by 2036.

► Immigrants as a % of total population of Canada 1871-2041 (projected)

Chart 10



Census 2021 (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, October 26, 2022).

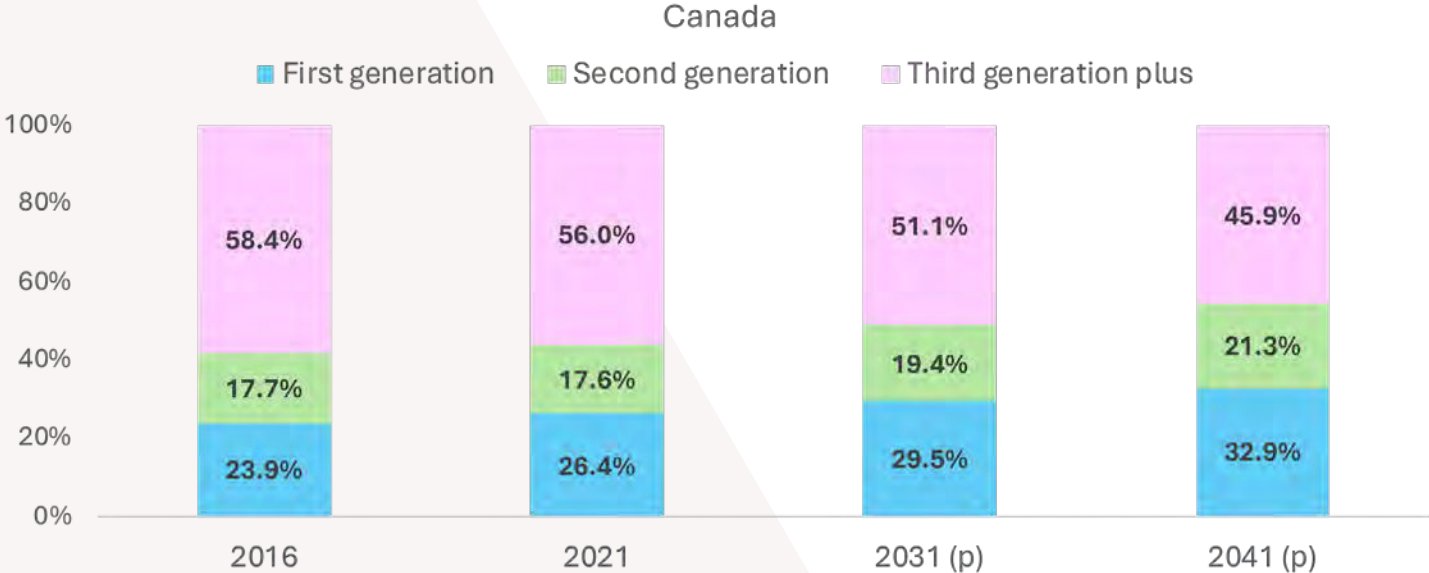
This growth in immigrants as a share of the total population has two causes: the welcoming of more immigrants to Canada, and the declining birthrate among the country’s non-immigrant population. As Statistics Canada explains, “the share of population growth due to natural increase has been falling in Canada because of population aging and lower fertility. Nearly four-fifths of the 1.8 million population increase from 2016 to 2021 was attributable to new arrivals to Canada either as permanent or temporary immigrants.”⁴

⁴ Statistics Canada, “Canada Tops G7 Growth Despite COVID,” *The Daily* (February 9, 2022); <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220209/dq220209a-eng.htm>.

The importance of immigration to Canada’s population is even more evident when we consider both first-generation immigrants (people born outside of Canada), and second-generation immigrants (people born in Canada but with at least one parent born outside of the country). Currently in Canada, 44 percent of the population is a first- or second-generation immigrant. This proportion is expected to increase to 54 percent by 2041. This means that by that year, less than 50 percent of the population will be composed of people who are neither immigrants nor the children of immigrants (see Chart 11).

► **Population by immigration generation
2016-2041 (projected)**

Chart 11



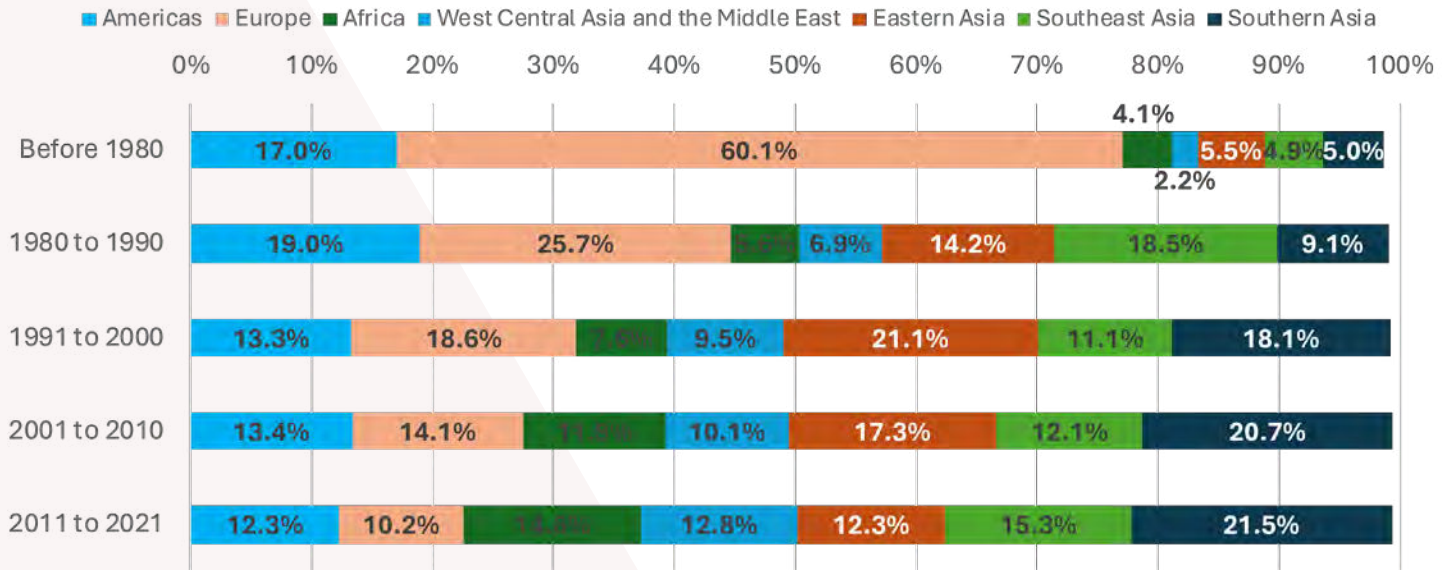
Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0338-01 (Ethnic or cultural origin by generation status), and Table 17-10-0146-01 (Projected population by racialized group, generation status and other selected characteristics). Non-permanent residents excluded.

This pattern is even more pronounced in the largest cities, where most new immigrants settle. In Toronto, four in five residents are first- or second-generation immigrants.

Immigration drives not only the growth of the total population, but also its increasing ethnic diversity. Among immigrants who arrived in Canada in the 1980s, 45 percent were born in Europe or the Americas; among more recent immigrants (those arriving between 2011 and 2021), this proportion is only 25 percent. Over the same period, the proportion born in Africa has increased from six to 15 percent, and the proportion both in Southern Asia has increased from nine to 22 percent (see Chart 12).

► Region of birth of immigrants by period of arrival in Canada (2021)

Chart 12



Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0307-01 (Immigrant status and period of immigration by place of birth).

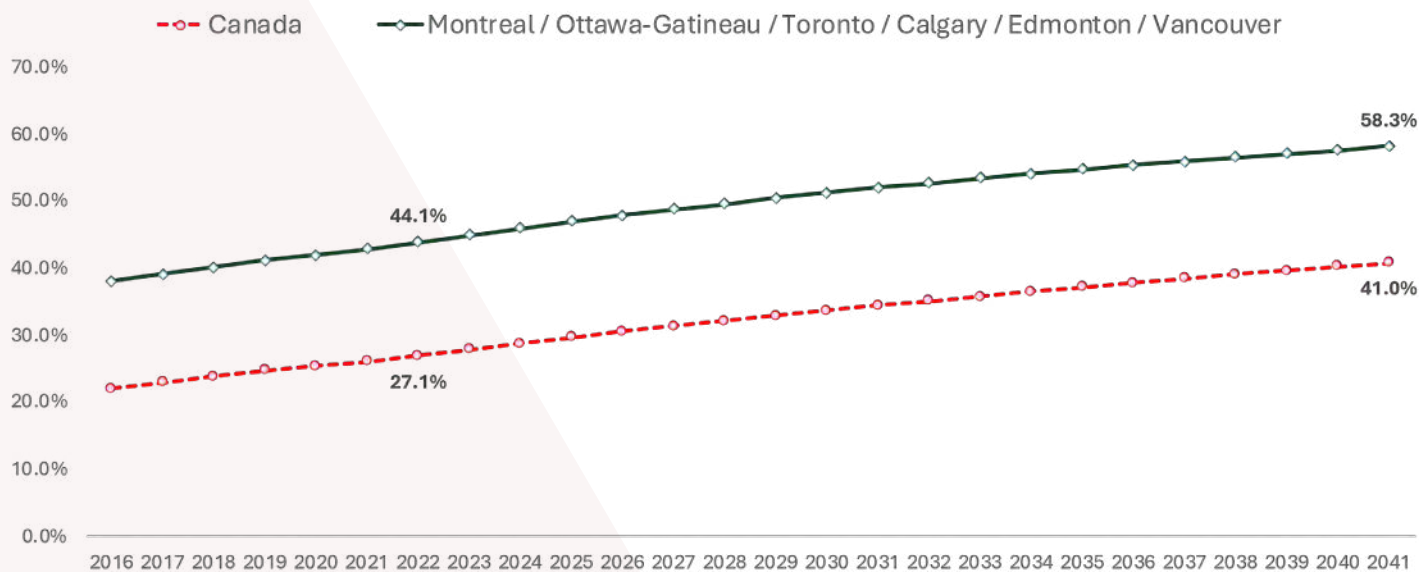
5. Racial identity

Immigration has not only contributed to the country's ethnic diversity, but more specifically, in more recent years, to its racial diversity. This is notably a result of the gradual shift of the source regions of new immigrants from Europe to Asia and Africa. This trend will continue, leading to an increase in the share of the total population that is racialized.

In 2021, 27 percent Canadians identified as a member of a racialized group. This proportion is projected to increase to 41 percent by 2041 (see Chart 13). The proportion that is racialized is greater in the country's largest cities, where most new immigrants settle. Taking the six largest metropolitan areas together (Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa-Gatineau, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver), 44 percent of the population was racialized in 2021. This proportion will reach 50 percent by 2030 and grow to 58 percent in 2041. In other words, within the next decade, the majority of the population living in the country's largest cities will be racialized (note that this is already the case in Toronto and Vancouver).

► **Racialized groups as a percentage of total population, Canada and six largest CMAs2 016-2041 (projected)**

Chart 13



Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0146-01 (Projected population by racialized group, generation status and other selected characteristics).

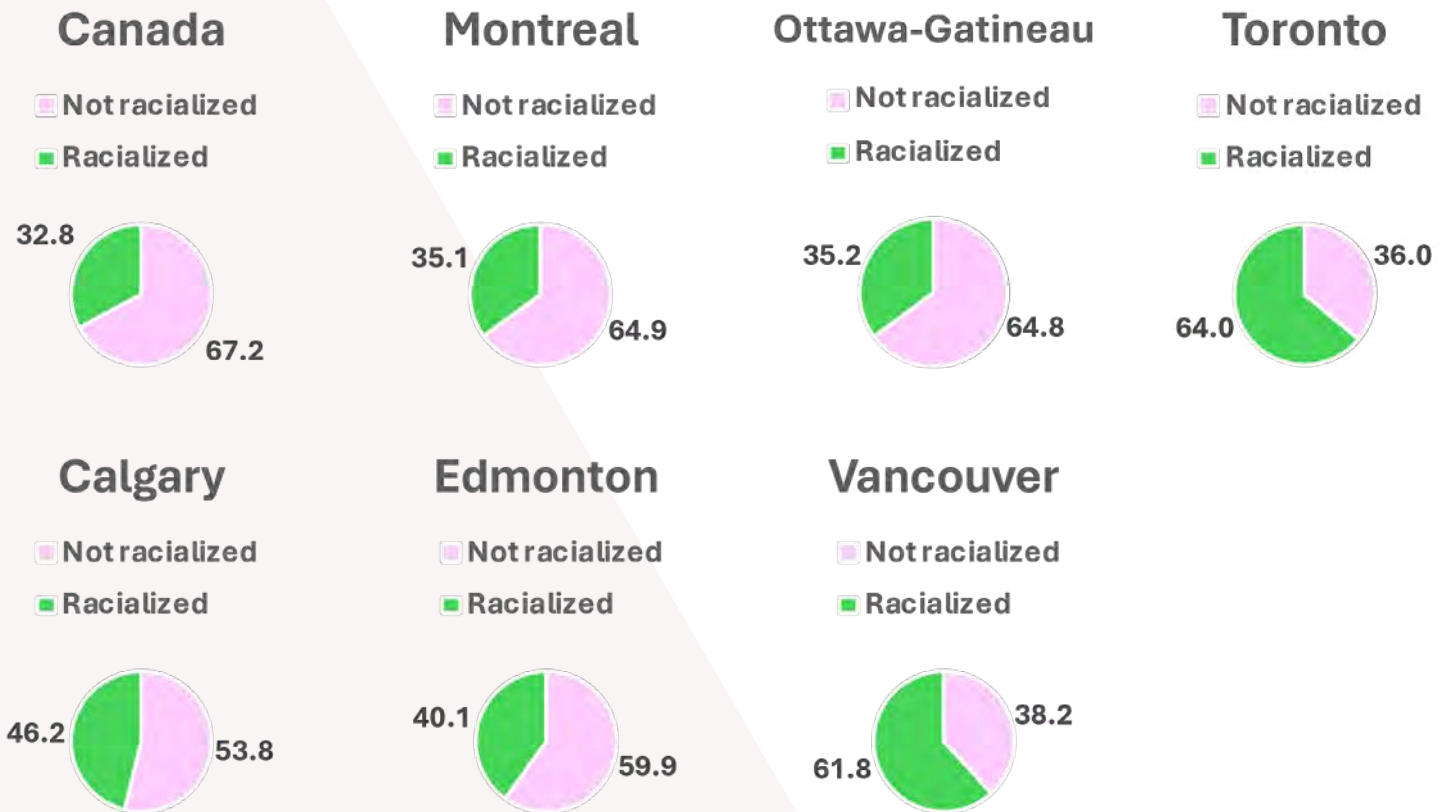
The four largest individual racialized groups in the country in 2021 were South Asian (7.1% of the total population), Chinese (4.7%), Black, (4.3%), and Filipino (2.5%). But the size of these groups is greater in the large cities. In Toronto, 19 percent of the population identifies as South Asian, 11 percent as Chinese, and eight percent as Black. In Montreal, eight percent identify as Black. In Vancouver, 20 percent identifies as Chinese, and 14 percent as South Asian.

Finally, the proportion of the population that is racialized is greater among younger Canadians – an important fact for agencies and organizations delivering programs and services to youth. Overall, in 2021, one in three Canadians under the age of 25 was racialized (see Chart 14). This proportion was 35 percent in Montreal and Ottawa-Gatineau, over 40 percent in Calgary and Edmonton, and over 60 percent in Toronto and Vancouver.

► **Racialized population (%), for largest CMAs (2021)**

Ages 0 to 24

Chart 14



Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0351-01 (Visible minority by gender and age).

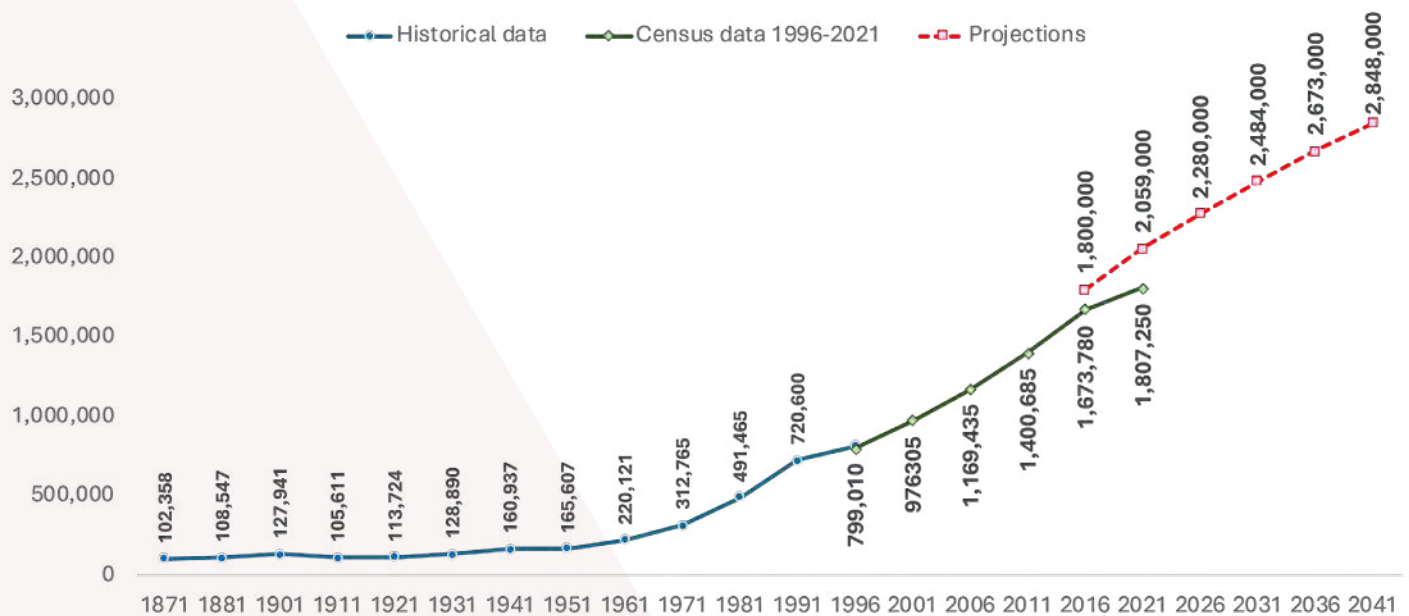
6. Indigenous Peoples

The long-term effect of the colonization of the Americas was a dramatic drop in the number of Indigenous Peoples, through displacement, disease, starvation, forced assimilation and conflict. Estimates of the Indigenous population living in the territory that became Canada prior to contact with Europeans vary; whatever the original number, by the end of the 19th century it had collapsed to just over 100,000.

The process of recovery was initially slow, but by 1961 the Indigenous population had doubled to over 200,000. By 1981, at the time that the recognition of Indigenous rights was in the process of being written into the country’s new constitution, it had reached almost 500,000. This growth has continued, with the number of Indigenous Peoples quadrupling over the ensuing four decades, to reach 1.8 million in 2021. By 2041, it is expected that there will be 2.8 million Indigenous People living in Canada (see Chart 15).

► Indigenous Peoples: historical, current and projected population 1871-2041 (projected)

Chart 15



Historical data reproduced in RCAP, Vol. I and Census 2001; Census data from Census reports; projections from Statistics Canada, Table 17-10-0144-01 (Projected population by Indigenous identity).

The current rate of growth of the Indigenous population is much higher than that for the non-Indigenous population. But as Statistics Canada has noted, not all of this growth can be explained by natural increase (the excess of the number of births over deaths). Some of it is the result of people choosing to identify as Indigenous when they had not previously done so. In the presentation of the 2021 Census results, the agency explains: “The faster growth of the Indigenous population is generally attributed to higher birth rates, combined with changes in the way respondents answer the census questionnaire from one census to the next. In general, respondents have become more likely to identify as Indigenous over time.”⁵ The reasons why people may choose to start identifying as Indigenous vary, but they could relate to: increasing pride in being Indigenous; the recognition of Indigenous rights and advances in Indigenous self-government which can make belonging to an Indigenous community more meaningful; and the discovery of Indigenous family heritage (for instance, in the case of Indigenous children who were removed for their birth-families at a very young age).

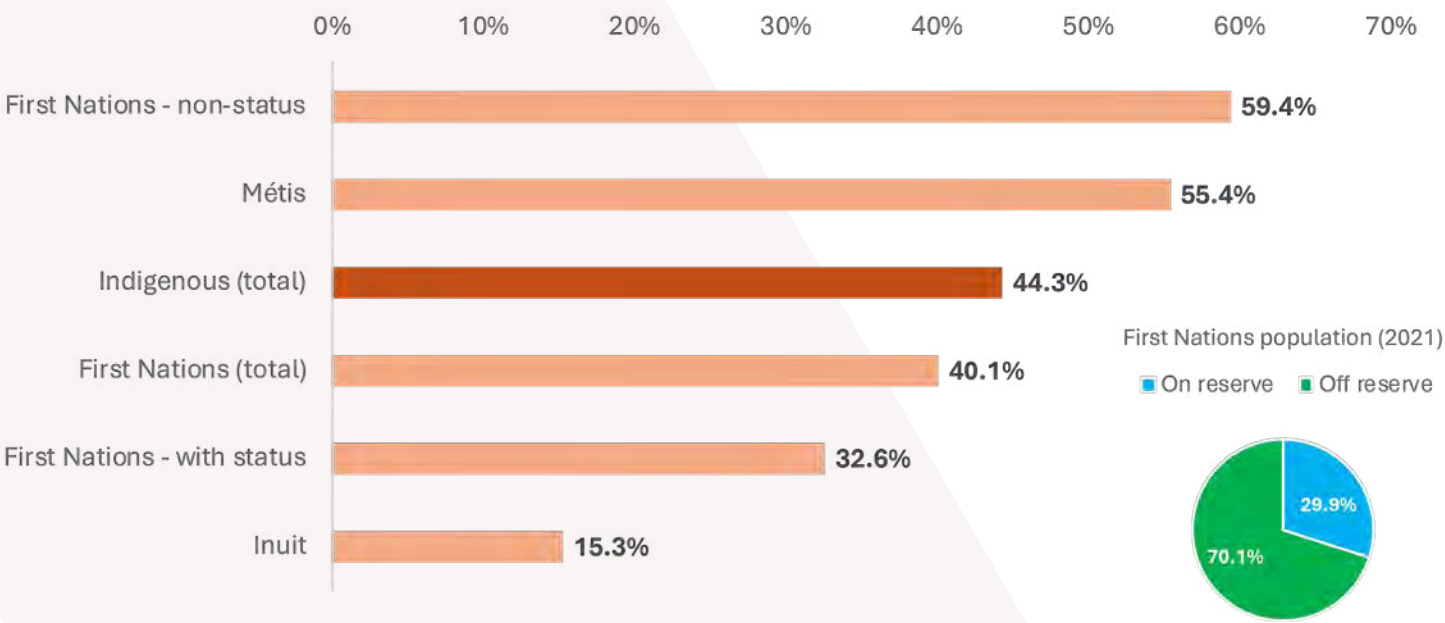
⁵ Statistics Canada, “Indigenous Population Continues to Grow and is Much Younger than the non-Indigenous Population, although the Pace of Growth has Slowed,” The Daily (September 21, 2022); <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm>.

First Nations Peoples form the largest Indigenous identity group – 58 percent of Indigenous Peoples in Canada identify as First Nations. Just over one in three (35%) are Métis, and four percent are Inuit.⁶ In 2021, there were over one million First Nations people living in Canada, as well as almost 625,000 Métis and over 70,000 Inuit.

The Indigenous population is becoming increasingly urban. Overall, 44 percent of Indigenous Peoples live in a census metropolitan area. However, this proportion varies significantly across the different Indigenous identity groups. Over half of non-status First Nations people (59%) and Métis (55%) live in an urban centre, compared to a smaller proportion of status First Nations people (33%) and Inuit (15%) (see Chart 16). The cities with the largest Indigenous population in terms of numbers are Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, and Ottawa-Gatineau. The cities with the largest Indigenous population as a share of their population are Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, Sudbury, Saskatoon and Kamloops (see Chart 17).

► **Proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples living in a large urban centre (2021)**

Chart 16



Statistics Canada, *The Daily* (September 21, 2022); data from Census 2021. Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0264-01 (Indigenous identity by Registered or Treaty Indian status and residence by Indigenous geography).

⁶ Statistics Canada, "Indigenous Population Continues to Grow and is Much Younger than the non-Indigenous Population, although the Pace of Growth has Slowed," *The Daily* (September 21, 2022); <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm>.

► Indigenous identity population – largest proportion and number in CMAs (2021)

Chart 17

| CMA | Indigenous (% of total) | CMA | Indigenous (#) |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Thunder Bay | 14.0% | Winnipeg | 102,075 |
| Winnipeg | 12.5% | Edmonton | 87,600 |
| Greater Sudbury | 11.3% | Vancouver | 63,340 |
| Saskatoon | 11.2% | Calgary | 48,625 |
| Kamloops | 11.1% | Ottawa - Gatineau | 46,540 |
| Regina | 10.0% | Montréal | 46,085 |
| Chilliwack | 9.4% | Toronto | 44,635 |
| Nanaimo | 8.7% | Saskatoon | 34,890 |
| Red Deer | 6.6% | Regina | 24,520 |
| Edmonton | 6.3% | Victoria | 19,455 |
| Kelowna | 6.1% | Greater Sudbury | 19,005 |
| Lethbridge | 6.0% | Halifax | 18,850 |
| Abbotsford - Mission | 5.5% | Thunder Bay | 16,935 |
| Belleville - Quinte West | 5.5% | Hamilton | 15,420 |
| Peterborough | 5.1% | Québec | 14,725 |
| Victoria | 5.0% | London | 13,675 |
| Canada | 5.0% | Kelowna | 13,420 |
| Fredericton | 4.8% | St. Catharines - Niagara | 13,080 |
| Brantford | 4.5% | Kamloops | 12,250 |
| Kingston | 4.1% | Windsor | 12,050 |

Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0292-01 (Indigenous identity population by gender and age).

In many of these cities, the proportion of the population that is Indigenous is higher among youth. More than one in four children under the age of 15 in Thunder Bay are Indigenous. The same is true of close to one in five children in Winnipeg; one in six in Kamloops, Saskatoon and Regina; and one in seven in Chilliwack, Nanaimo and Sudbury (see Chart 18).

► Indigenous children (age 0-14) as a % of total population age 0-14 (largest % in CMAs) (2021)

Chart 18



Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0292-01 (Indigenous identity population by gender and age).

Larger cities outside of Western Canada are home to a significant share of the urban Indigenous population, even if they account for only a small share of the total population of those cities. One in ten Indigenous people who live in an urban centre live in either Toronto or Montreal.⁷

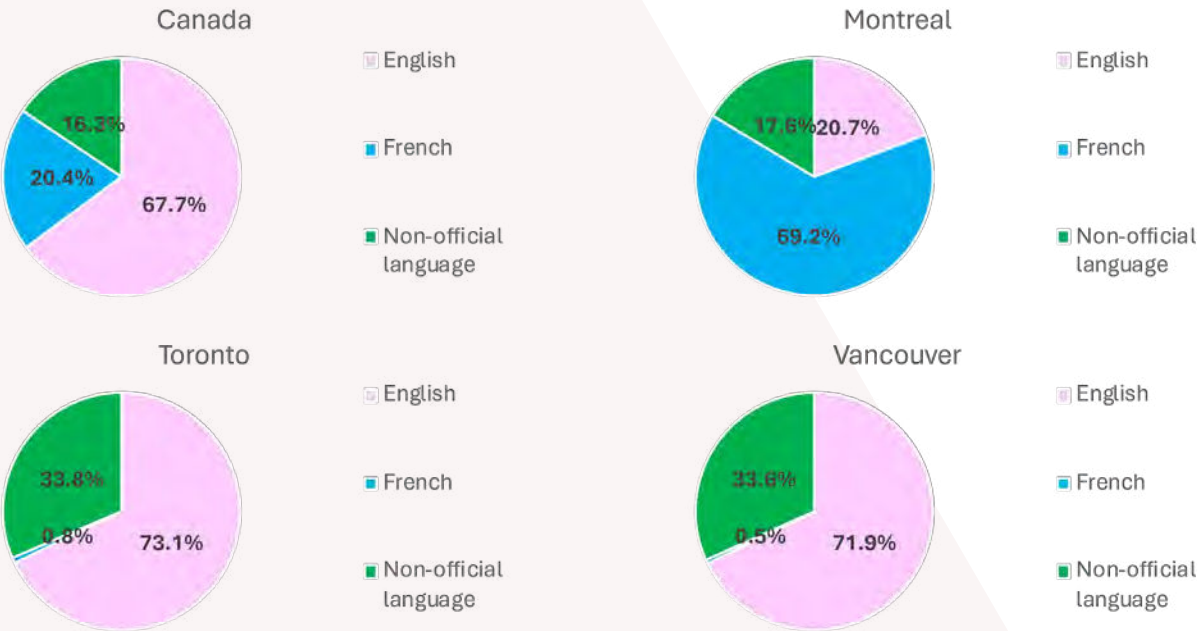
7. Language

The diversity of the country’s population also can be illustrated in terms of the languages people speak. While almost all people living in Canada (98%) can speak one of the two official languages (English or French) well enough to have a conversation, one in four has another language as the one they learned to speak first. Statistics Canada reports that this is the highest proportion on record.⁸

The Census also collects information about which language people speak most often at home. The proportion speaking a language other than English or French most often at home has been rising steadily, from 12.7 percent in 2006 to 16.3 percent in 2021.⁹ But this proportion is larger in many of the country’s largest cities. In both Toronto and Vancouver, one in three residents speak a language other than English or French most often at home (see Chart 19).

► Home language, Canada and three largest CMAs (2021)

Chart 19



Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0227-01 (Language spoken most often at home by age).

⁷ Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0292-01 (Indigenous identity population by gender and age); <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810029201>.

⁸ Statistics Canada, "While English and French Are Still the Main Languages Spoken in Canada, the Country’s Linguistic Diversity Continues to Grow," The Daily (August 17, 2022); <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220817/dq220817a-eng.htm>.

⁹ Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0226-01 (Language spoken most often at home by age); <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810022601>.

Which specific languages – other than English or French – are most common also varies by city (see Chart 20). In both Toronto and Vancouver, the most common first languages learned after English are Mandarin, Cantonese and Punjabi. In Montreal, the most common first languages learned after French and English are Arabic, Spanish and Italian.

► **Most common first language learned, Canada and three largest CMAs (2021)**

Chart 20

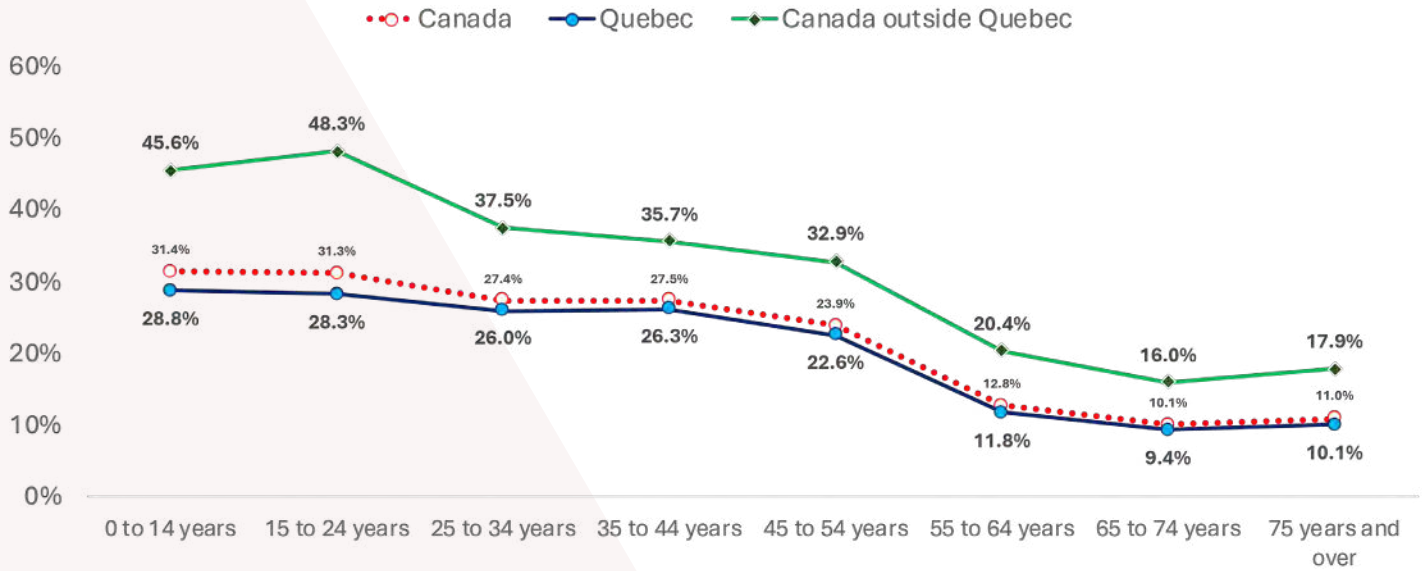
| Canada | | Montréal (CMA) | | Toronto (CMA) | | Vancouver (CMA) | |
|------------------------------|------------|----------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
| English | 19,979,065 | French | 2,515,090 | English | 3,070,355 | English | 1,331,085 |
| French | 7,095,105 | English | 467,685 | Mandarin | 260,200 | Mandarin | 192,035 |
| Mandarin | 678,240 | Arabic | 175,445 | Yue (Cantonese) | 238,420 | Yue (Cantonese) | 182,810 |
| Punjabi (Panjabi) | 667,795 | Spanish | 139,755 | Punjabi (Panjabi) | 209,355 | Punjabi (Panjabi) | 181,960 |
| Yue (Cantonese) | 553,085 | Italian | 86,515 | Spanish | 135,265 | Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino) | 68,135 |
| Spanish | 536,460 | Mandarin | 53,380 | Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino) | 134,565 | Korean | 52,395 |
| Arabic | 509,105 | Haitian Creole | 43,920 | Urdu | 131,890 | Spanish | 46,950 |
| Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino) | 463,185 | Greek | 33,625 | Italian | 124,475 | Hindi | 27,370 |
| Italian | 315,765 | Portuguese | 33,505 | Tamil | 112,460 | Vietnamese | 26,660 |
| Portuguese | 239,015 | Romanian | 32,270 | Portuguese | 101,655 | French | 23,885 |

Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0617-01 (All languages spoken at home by mother tongue).

While new Canadians bring many languages with them to this country, their role in revitalizing Canada’s official language communities should not be overlooked, especially in the case of the French language. Almost one in three children living in Canada who speak French at home are either immigrants or children of immigrants. This proportion is slightly lower in the province of Quebec (29%), but is much higher in the rest of Canada (46%) (see Chart 21). In the city of Montreal, it is 47 percent. In other words, outside Quebec, and in Quebec in the Montreal metropolitan area, almost one in two young French speakers have an origin that is not “French Canadian” but rather from the global francophonie.

► **Proportion of French home language population that is first- or second-generation immigrant, by age group (2021)**

Chart 21



Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0617-01 (All languages spoken at home by mother tongue, knowledge of official languages and generation status).

It is important, then, not to juxtapose immigrant communities with official language communities (whether anglophone or francophone), as newcomers contribute both to the growth of “other” language communities in Canada, and the renewal (or growth) of English- and French-speaking communities.

8. Religion

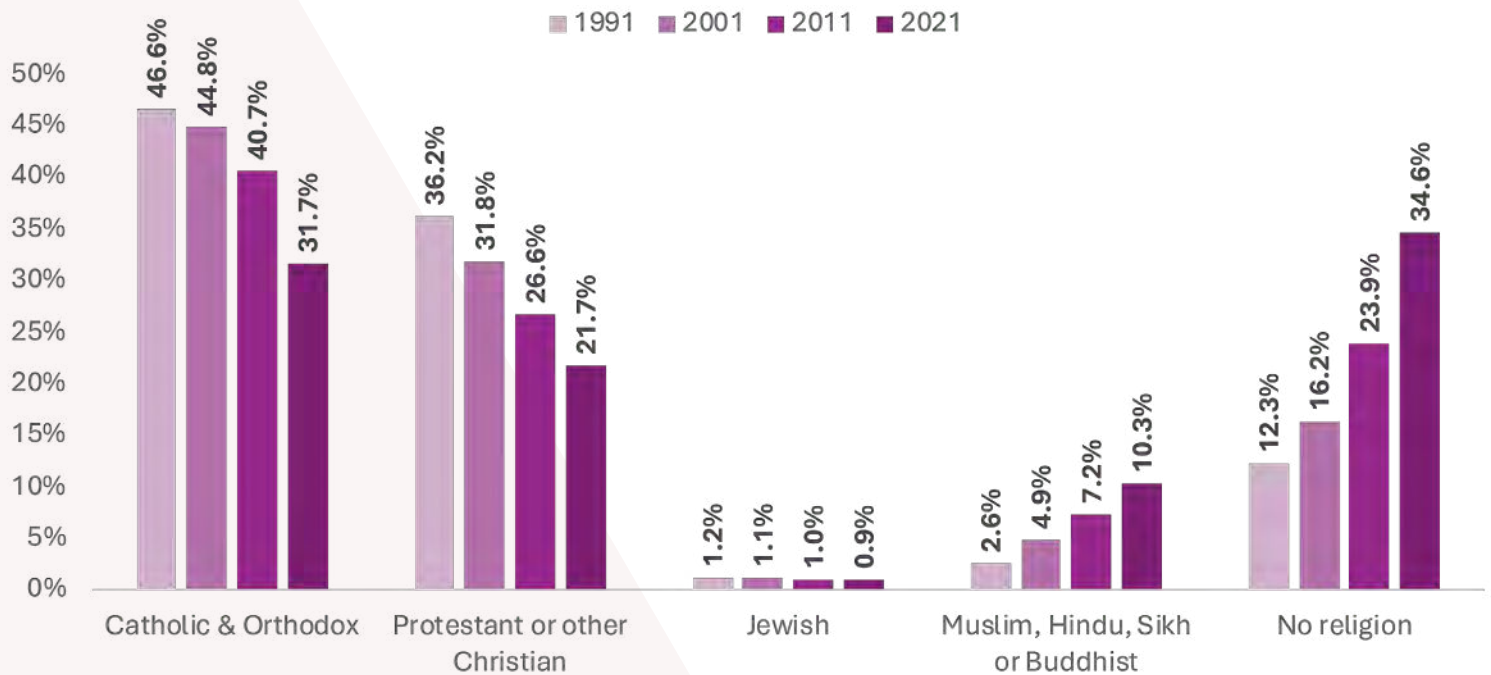
While religion was one of the most important features of individual and community identities in Canada in the decades prior to and following Confederation, it is generally assumed to be less relevant today. While the Census takes place every five years, the question about religion is asked only every ten years – a sign that regular updates of this information are considered less essential.

It is certainly the case that, with the passage of time, fewer Canadians identify with any particular religion. Over the past 30 years, the proportion of Canadians who say they have no religion has tripled, from 12 percent to 36 percent. Over the same period, the proportion that identifies with a Christian religion (whether Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant) has declined, from 83 percent to 53 percent (see Chart 22).

► Religious affiliation

1991-2021

Chart 22



Census of Canada and author's calculations.

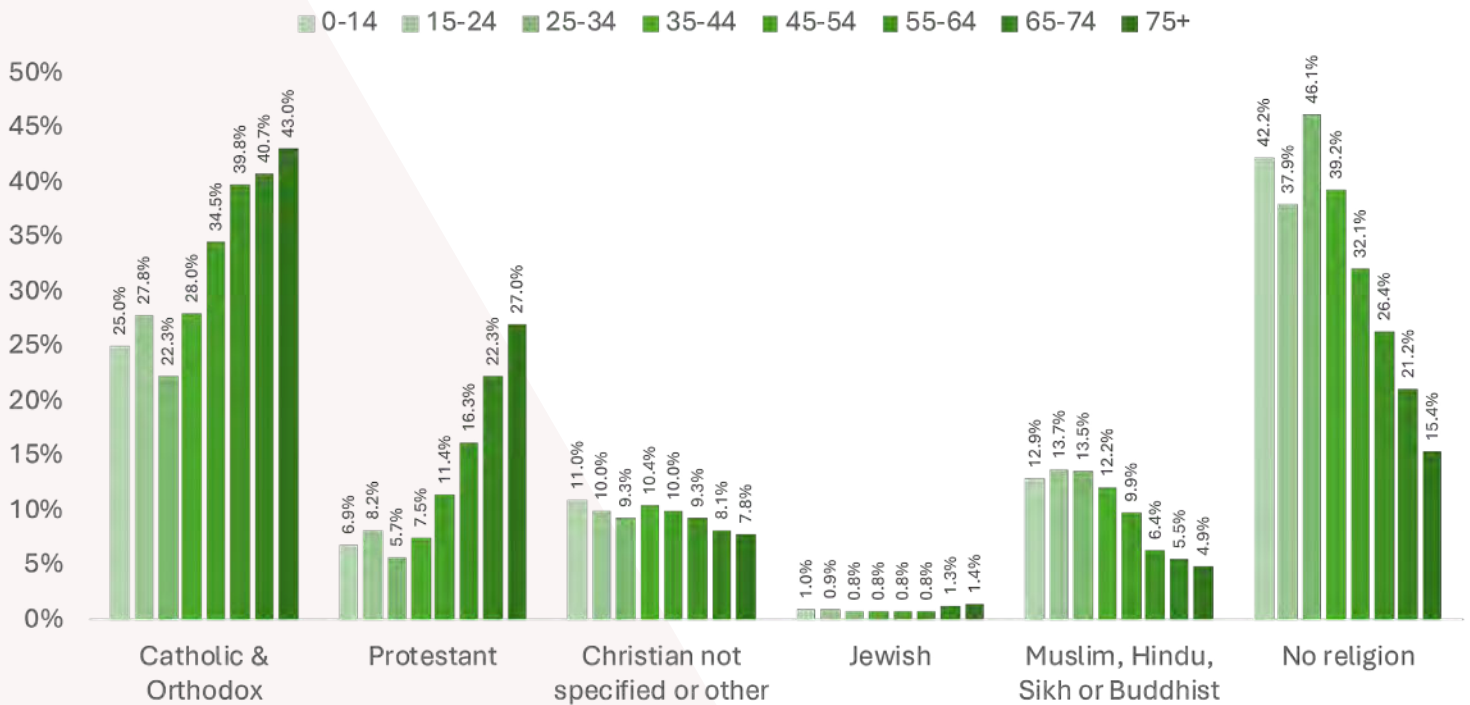
To say that Canada is becoming more secular (or less religious), is however both correct and somewhat misleading, as it overlooks a second important trend, namely the growth in the number of adherents to non-Christian religions. While the proportion of Canadians with a Christian faith has declined since 1991, the proportion who are Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist has increased from just less than three percent, to just over 10 percent. Over the past 20 years, the proportion of the Canadian population that is Muslim has doubled; the same is true of the proportions that are either Hindu or Sikh.¹⁰

This “double trend” (of the simultaneous growth of “no religion” and “new religions” in Canada) can also be illustrated by looking at the distribution in 2021 of religious affiliations across age groups (see Chart 23). Compared to their older counterparts, younger Canadians are much more likely to say they have no religion, and much less likely to say that they are Catholic, Orthodox or (especially) Protestant. But younger Canadians are also more likely to be Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist. Among older Canadians, the number of Protestants significantly outweighs the combined number of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs or Buddhists; but the opposite is true among younger Canadians.

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, “The Canadian Census: A Rich Portrait of the Country’s Religious and Ethnocultural Diversity,” The Daily (October 26, 2022); <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026b-eng.htm>.

► Religious affiliation by age (2021)

Chart 23



Statistics Canada, Table 98-10-0342-01 (Religion by visible minority and generation status).

This pattern is even more pronounced in the Toronto metropolitan area. Among all Canadians age 15 to 34, 14 percent have one of these four non-Christian religions. But among Torontonians in this age group, the figure reaches 28 percent.

In short, then, Canadian society is simultaneously becoming more secular and more religiously diverse – and both trends are important when looking at younger generations. Younger Canadians are more likely than their parents and grandparents to have no religion, and more likely to have a non-Christian religion.

Both of these trends are expected to continue in the coming decades.¹¹

¹¹ Statistics Canada, Immigration and Diversity: Population Projections for Canada and its Regions, 2011 to 2036 (January 25, 2017); <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2017001-eng.htm>.

9. Education

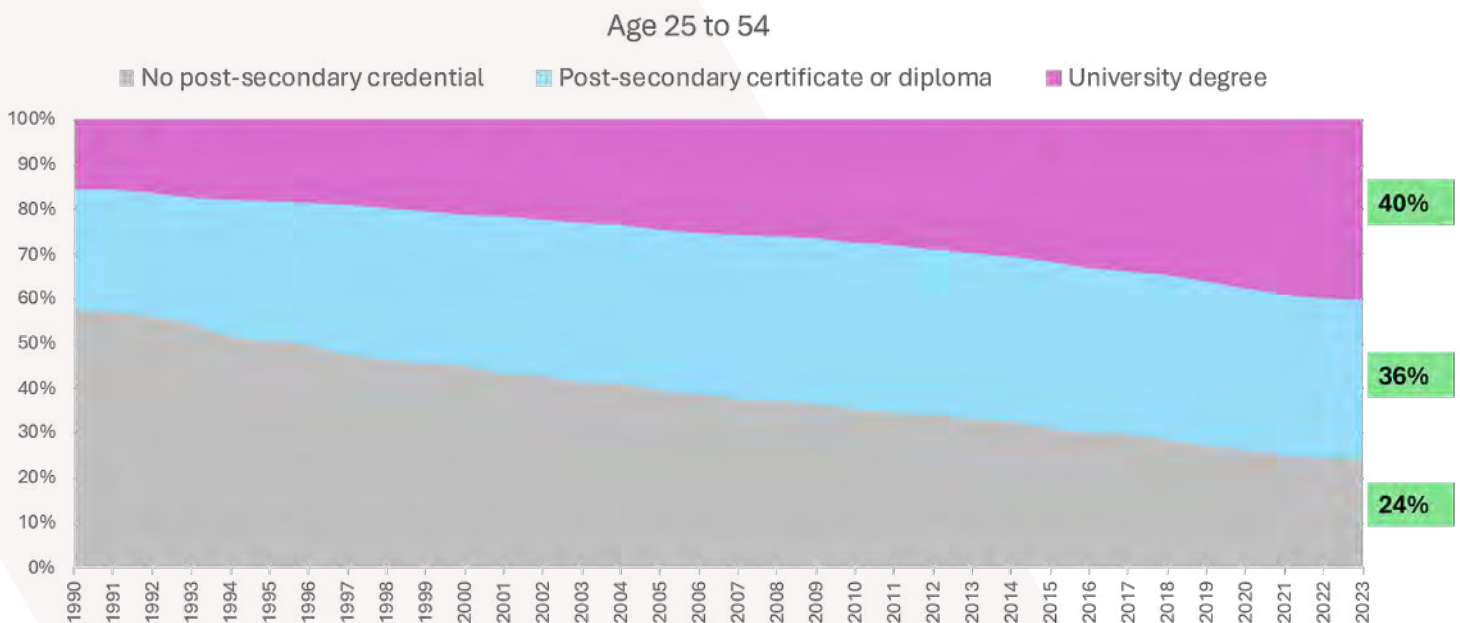
Canada is a highly educated society, and it continues to become more highly educated over time.

Three decades ago, at the beginning of the 1990s, fewer than one in two Canadians of core working age (age 25 to 54) had a post-secondary credential (whether a certificate, diploma or degree). By 2005, that proportion had reached 60 percent. It reached 70 percent in 2016, and now stands at 76 percent.

The proportion of Canadians in this age group with a non-university post-secondary certificate or diploma increased in the 1990s and the early 2000s to reach 37 percent, but it has now plateaued at that level (currently standing at 36%). But the proportion with a university degree has continued to grow. It doubled from 15 percent in the early 1990s to 30 percent in the mid-2010s, and has increased in each year since then. Currently, 40 percent of Canadians age 25 to 54 have a university degree (see Chart 24).

► Educational attainment (age 25 to 54) 1990-2023

Chart 24



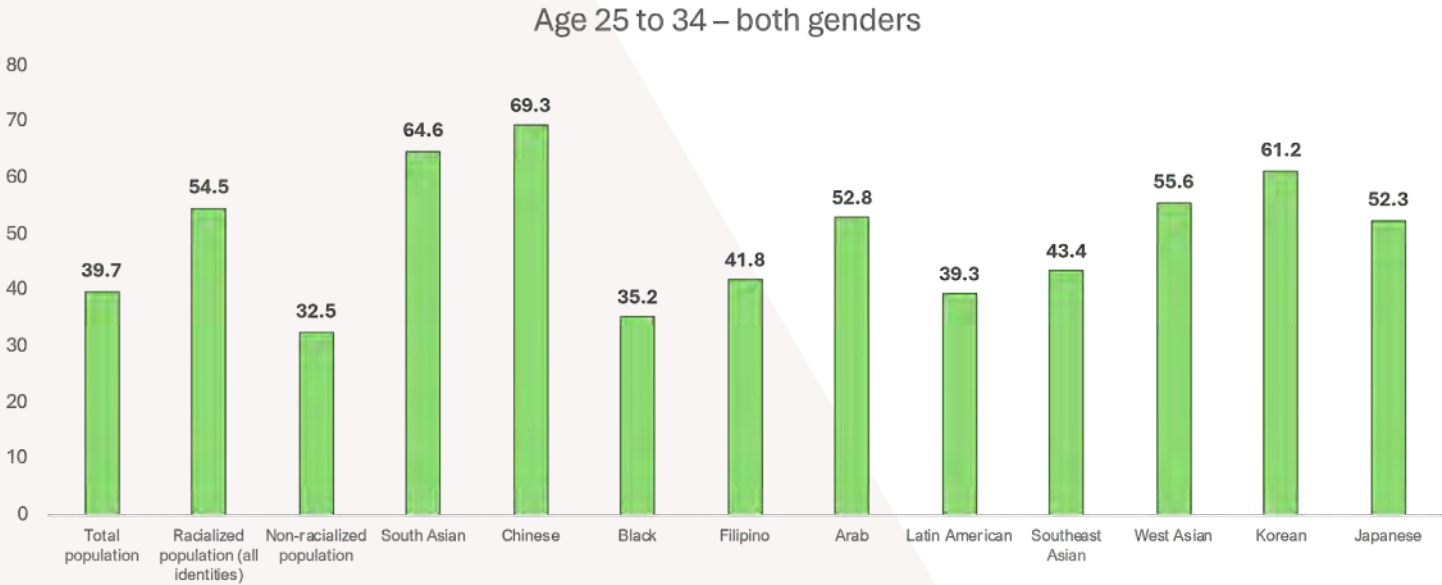
Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0118-01 (Labour force characteristics by educational degree).

There are, however, considerable differences in the educational attainment of different population groups. Consider, for instance, the proportion of different racial identity groups with a university degree. Among those age 25 to 34, this proportion ranges from a high of 69 percent among those who identify as Chinese, to a low of 33 percent among those who are not racialized.

Currently, three identity groups have a university attainment rate that is below the Canadian average: those who are Latin American, those who are Black, and those who are not racialized (see Chart 25). Within each of these three groups (Latin American, Black, and non-racialized), university attainment rates are even lower for men. Filipino men (age 25 to 34) also have below-average rates of university attainment.¹²

► **Proportion of population with a university degree (BA or above), age 25 to 34, by racial identity (2021)**

Chart 25



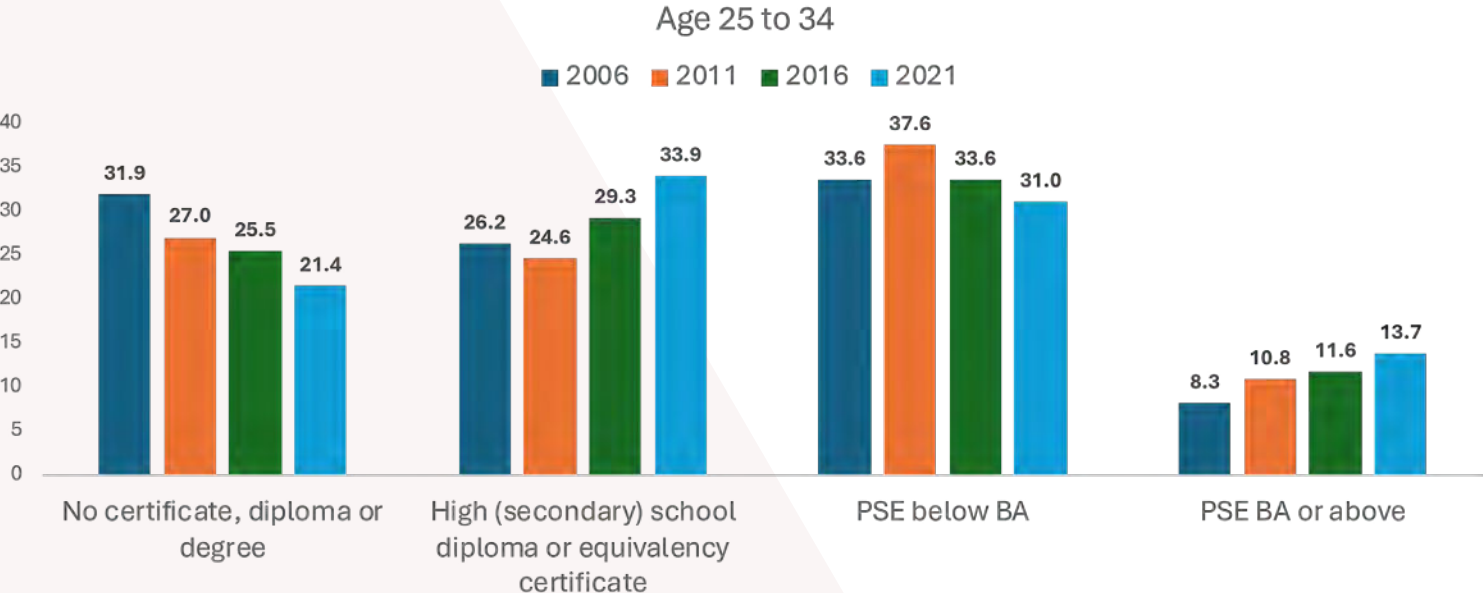
Source: Environics Institute & Environics Analytics, based on census data.

¹² Data relating to education attainment are from calculations by the Environics Institute and Environics Analytics, based on the 2021 Census.

University attainment rates are also much lower than average in the case of Indigenous Peoples. On the one hand, this rate has been increasing over time: the proportion of Indigenous Peoples age 25 to 34 with a university degree has risen from 8.3 percent in 2006, to 13.7 percent in 2021 (see Chart 26). On the other hand, despite these gains, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous university attainment rates has continued to widen: in 2006, the rate for non-Indigenous peoples was 21.5 percentage points higher; in 2021, it was 27.5 points higher. Paradoxically, then, the educational attainment of Indigenous Peoples is simultaneously improving and falling further behind that of their non-Indigenous counterparts.

► **Educational attainment, Indigenous Peoples 2006-2021**

Chart 26

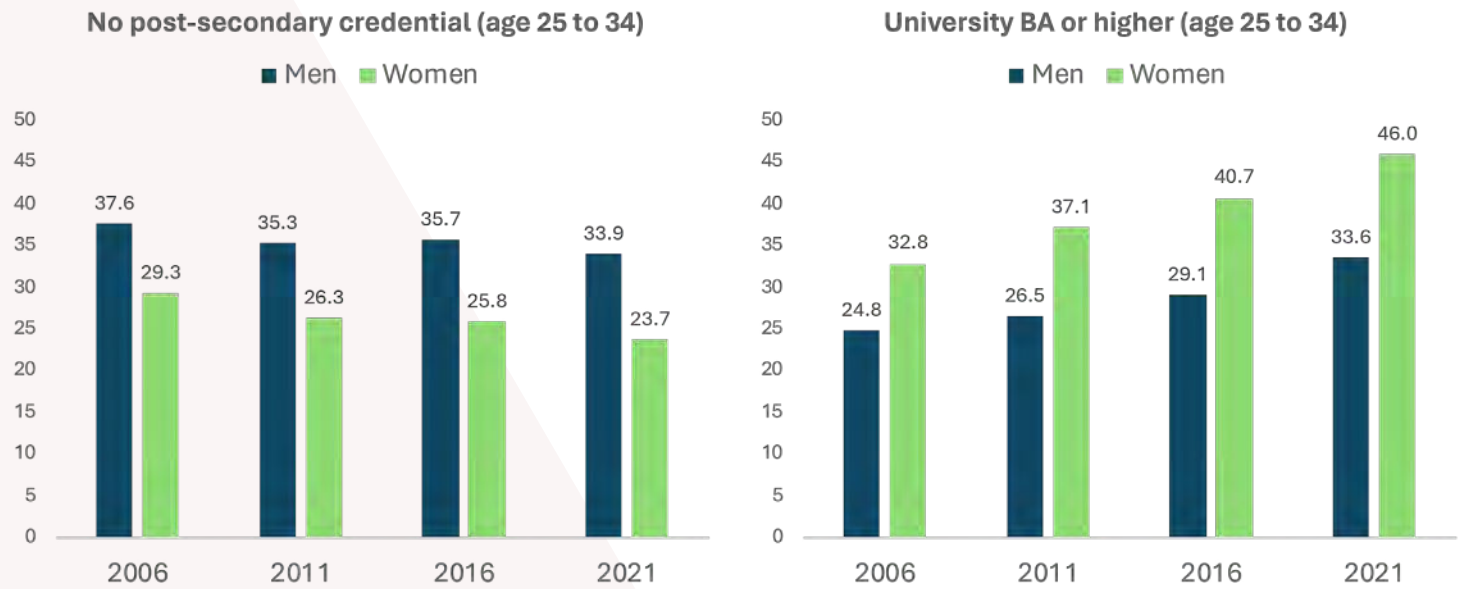


Source: Environics Institute & Environics Analytics, based on census data.

A similar pattern is evident in the case of men and women. Young men in Canada have never been as successful in education as they are today. Fewer are leaving school before graduating high school, and more are completing university (see Chart 27). However, the educational attainment of younger women has also been improving, and as a result, the gender gap in university attainment has been widening. In 2006, the university attainment rate of women was eight percentage points higher than that of men; in 2021, it was 12.4 points higher.

► Educational attainment, by gender 2006-2021

Chart 27



Source: Environics Institute & Environics Analytics, based on census data.

Chart 1:

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000501>

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0057-01 Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1 (x 1,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710005701>

Chart 2:

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0146-01 Projected population by racialized group, generation status and other selected characteristics (x 1,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710014601>

Chart 3:

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0135-01 Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710013501>

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0146-01 Projected population by racialized group, generation status and other selected characteristics (x 1,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710014601>

Chart 4:

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000501>

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0057-01 Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1 (x 1,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710005701>

Chart 5:

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000501>

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0057-01 Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1 (x 1,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710005701>

Chart 6:

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000501>

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0057-01 Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1 (x 1,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710005701>

Chart 7:

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0135-01 Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710013501>

Chart 8:

2016 Census: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170802/dq170802a-eng.htm>

2021 Census: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220713/g-a001-eng.htm>

Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0138-01 Household type including multigenerational households and structural type of dwelling: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810013801>

2006: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-553/pages/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=01&Table=2&Data=Count&Age=1&StartRec=1&Sort=2&Display=Page>

2001: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/PrivateHouseholds/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&View=1a&Table=1&StartRec=1&Sort=2&B1=Counts>

Chart 9:

Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0125-01 Marital status, age group and gender: Canada, provinces and territories and census metropolitan areas <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810012501>

Chart 10:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/g-a001-eng.htm>

Chart 11:

Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0338-01 Ethnic or cultural origin by generation status: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810033801>

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0146-01 Projected population by racialized group, generation status and other selected characteristics (x 1,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710014601>

Chart 12:

Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0307-01 Immigrant status and period of immigration by place of birth: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810030701>

Chart 13:

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0146-01 Projected population by racialized group, generation status and other selected characteristics (x 1,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710014601>

Chart 15:

Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0144-01 Projected population by Indigenous identity, age group, sex, area of residence, provinces and territories, and projection scenario, Canada (x 1,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710014401>

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/English/census01/products/analytic/companion/abor/charts/abancestry.cfm>

Chart 16:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm>

Chart 17:

Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0292-01 Indigenous identity population by gender and age: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810029201>

Chart 18:

Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0292-01 Indigenous identity population by gender and age: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810029201>

Chart 19:

Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0227-01 Language spoken most often at home by age: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810022701>

Chart 20:

Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0617-01 All languages spoken at home by mother tongue, knowledge of official languages and generation status: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810061701>

Chart 22:

1991

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/English/census91/data/profiles/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=1&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=227&PRID=0&PTYPE=56079&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=1991&THEME=113&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=>

<https://publications.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/96F0030X/96F0030XIE2001015.pdf>

2001

<https://publications.gc.ca/Collection/Statcan/96F0030X/96F0030XIE2001015.pdf>

2011

[https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?TABID=2&LANG=E&A=R&APATH=3&DE-
TAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=01&GL=-1&GID=1118296&GK=1&GRP=0&O=D&PID=105399&PRID=0&PTY-
PE=105277&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2013&THEME=95&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=&D1=0&D2=0&D3=
0&D4=0&D5=0&D6=0](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?TABID=2&LANG=E&A=R&APATH=3&DE-
TAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=01&GL=-1&GID=1118296&GK=1&GRP=0&O=D&PID=105399&PRID=0&PTY-
PE=105277&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2013&THEME=95&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=&D1=0&D2=0&D3=
0&D4=0&D5=0&D6=0)

2021

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810035301>

Chart 23:

Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0342-01 Religion by visible minority and generation status: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=9810034201>

Chart 24:

Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0118-01 Labour force characteristics by educational degree, annual (x 1,000) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410011801>

About YMCA Canada:

The YMCA is a charity that ignites the potential in over 2 million people annually, helping them grow, lead, and give back to their communities. Across Canada, the YMCA delivers a wide variety of programs and services that empower people of all ages and life stages to overcome barriers and rise to their full potential. Programs include child care, health and wellness, aquatics, employment services, immigrant settlement, camps, mental wellness, and many other community initiatives that respond to local needs. Foundational to all this is the YMCA's commitment to creating spaces and experiences where everyone feels safe, welcome, and a sense of belonging.

The YMCA in Canada is comprised of 37 YMCA Member Associations, supported by YMCA Canada, the national office, working together so all Canadians can shine on.

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